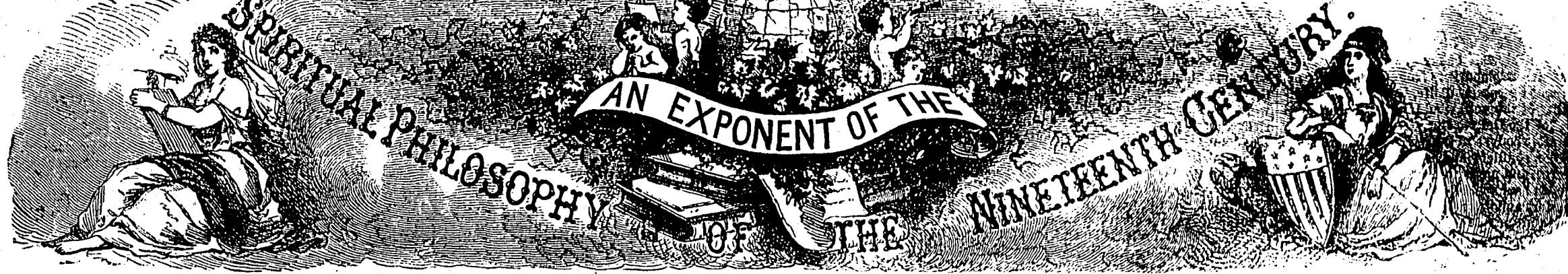


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The Rostrum.

THE RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS OF SPIRITUALISM.

Lecture delivered before the Brooklyn Conference of Spiritualists, Nov. 15th, 1879, by HENRY KIDDLE.
(Reported for the Banner of Light.)

The grandest feature of what is called Modern Spiritualism is the light which it has thrown upon the future world, the condition of mankind on passing into it, and their subsequent progression toward higher spheres, or degrees, of spiritual wisdom, purity and happiness. The great mass of information in relation to this momentous subject which has been received by means of spirit communication, during the last thirty years, constitutes a revelation far transcending any other previously vouchsafed to mankind, not excepting even that of Swedenborg—the greatest seer, or spirit medium, of the eighteenth century, and one of the greatest the world has ever seen.

There is, indeed, it must be confessed, much in the messages of these latter days that seems contradictory; but, in judging the statements that come in this way, we must beware of prejudice, of preconception, but more particularly of wilful, blind conceit; we must bear in mind how little we, in this life, can ever really know of the spirit-world and of the nature of spirit-life—its varied scenes, its inconceivable conditions—beyond the realm of time, space and sensation. Revelation is not reason; and, although we ought to bring to bear upon what is presented as revelation our best and calmest reasoning powers, we should beware of judging it by the independent conclusions of reason, or of scientific investigation. The mere fact of revelation implies that what is disclosed is beyond the reach of our ordinary observing and reasoning faculties. No man, by the exclusive exercise of these faculties, could ever have learned anything of the vast supersensuous realm around him. No reason conducts him to the scientist's paradise—Materialism, in which he indulges in his worship of Protoplasm—the (so-called) "physical basis of life"; adores the ideal genius of matter, as possessing, according to his enlightened scientific creed, the "promise and potency of every form of life"; or the goddess of Nature, whose wondrous beauties of artistic creation and intelligent design, the devotee of Materialism is always ready, in the blindest and weakest kind of idolatry, to worship, mistaking the creation for the Creator, in defiance of the most elementary law of scientific reasoning—that every effect must have an adequate cause.

Can, therefore, these paltry conclusions of reason, based on the exclusive perception of material objects—these barren negations—present any standard by which to judge the revelations that have come to us in these latter days—that have come to mankind at various periods of the world's history, bringing to them a knowledge of the infinite psychic realm, in which we "move and have our being," but from which we obtain, only in favored moments, by special dispensations, or through gifted intermediaries, occasional flashes of light, to bid us look beyond the world of sense and matter, instead of groveling forever in dust and darkness? It is at such times that, stimulated into activity by these precious gleams, our spiritual nature begins to exercise its faculties, so long dormant—begins to throw off the thick veil of flesh that enshrouds it, and thus is enabled to catch glimpses of the myriads of spiritual beings all around us; and then, no longer satisfied with the material objects that environ us, we are ready to "look through nature up to nature's God," and to strive to bring ourselves into an affectional as well as an intelligent relation to the Great Author of our being.

All religion is based upon revelation; and all revelation comes through spiritual manifestation and communication. In the most rudimentary stages of society, mankind appear to be the most clairvoyant of spiritual presence; but, being incapable of rational discrimination, they generally fall into idle and debasing superstitions. The Creator, it is evident, did not close entirely the soul's spiritual perceptions when he caused it to be clothed in the material garments which he designed it to wear during this life of experience and probation. Draper truly says: "The negro under the equinoctial line, the dwarfish Laplander beyond the Arctic Cir-

cle—man everywhere in his barbarous state, is a believer in sorcery, witchcraft, enchantment"; but this learned and materialistic professor can find no explanation for this fact, except that the human mind "delights in the incomprehensible," which is both untrue and absurd; for the human mind, in its unsophisticated state, delights not in the incomprehensible but in the unseen, and comprehends it better than after it has been perverted by the arrogant assumptions of a false philosophy. The barbarian, like the child, has a larger share of spiritual insight. The early poetry of every nation abounds in the ghostly, or spiritual. I may instance that most remarkable of all the Biblical writings—the Book of Job, citing that wonderful description of the nocturnal visitant from the spirit-realm:

"In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof; an image was before mine eyes: there was silence, and I heard a voice." See.

Hundreds of passages in Ossian's poems attest the same fact; while, in his beautiful "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," Wordsworth gives expression to the same phenomenon in connection with child life:

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy;
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows:
He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily follows from the east,
Must travel, still is nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended."
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

This spiritual insight, existing in a greater or less degree in different persons, stimulated at various periods by special dispensations from the spirit-world, is the basis and source of what some have been pleased to call the "religious instinct," whether it finds its exercise in the fetishism or voodooism of barbarous tribes, or in the rites and ceremonies of civilized nations. Nevertheless, had mankind been left entirely without special or occasional spiritual revelations, they would have been in the absolute darkness of materialism and sensuality, without a single ray of religious light to beacon them to higher aspirations. But God has not permitted this. The perversions of self-will, the blindness of self-conceit, will take man far, far from his maker; but, like the comet, however far, in its eccentric flight, it may depart from the source of light and attractive power, it finally reaches a point where the feebleness of its centrifugal tendency is overcome by the centripetal force, and it returns on its pathway toward the central orb. Thus, apparently by the operation of a general law, man when most remote from spiritual impression, begins again, by what appears to be a special revelation, to be startled by the interposition of supersensuous phenomena. These phenomena are of various kinds; but one fact deserves a careful consideration—they have never been so striking, so general, or so sudden as to overwhelm man's understanding and will, and at once compel his acceptance and belief. He has the liberty to reject; to deny; for it is contrary to the fundamental law of God's creation and government to leave no opportunity for the exercise of choice. Man's free will must not be superseded, for a reason hereafter to be explained.

The appearance, at different times, in different nations—perhaps in every nation—of remarkable personages—gifted with extraordinary spirit power, ethical wisdom, sublime heroism, and superhuman virtue, is a conspicuous and interesting feature of these special revelations. These heavenly messengers—divinely anointed or illuminated—are not received by those to whom they are sent; but they never fail to leave the light of their glorious presence; and succeeding generations at first honor them, treasure up their divine precepts, and at last establish a religious cult in their adoration, and pay them divine honors. Among the Chinese, the Hindus, the Persians, the Jews, the Peruvians, and other nations, tradition, if not history, preserves the memory of such a divinely commissioned being, and the beneficent results of his mission.

Such is the basis of revealed religion—a great and fertile theme upon which I only touch by way of introduction.

Before the advent of the modern spiritualistic phenomena, the civilized world—or that group of nationalities which are comprehended in the term Christendom—was fast sinking into a state of total insensibility to the existence and claims of the supersensuous. Materialism was fast spreading its dark pall over the educated portion of society, and bringing into the social system a total abnegation of God and immortality. The higher the educated classes had risen in intellectual culture—the further they had gone in scientific research and discovery, and its application to the practical wants and conveniences of material life, the more insolent were they growing in their denial of everything not to be explored by what they were pleased to call scientific methods. Every phenomenon of a spiritualistic character on record was, in the light of this arrogant intellectualism, banished dogmatically to the region of superstition and delusion; and thus science had, indeed, no message for mankind but that which Epicurus had taught more than twenty-one centuries ago—to make the most of this life according to scientific teachings, and then to surrender calmly their being to the infinite realm of material molecules and blind, unintelligent force. The great American poet prostituted his genius to a defence of scientific materialism; but he showed its weakness when he attempted, in his beau-

tiful and majestic lines, to offer a consolation to him who shuddered at annihilation:

"Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant world—with kings.
The powerful of the earth—the wise, the good,
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulchre.
And what if thou withdraw
In silence from the living, and no friend
Take note of thy departure?—*But that breathe
Will share thy destiny.*"

What a "tame, flat, and unprofitable conclusion" to be enshrined in lines of such poetical beauty and finish! But it was the host materialistic philosophy could afford; and to this complexion had the world come at the time these lines were penned. Suddenly, however, the mystic rapping came, and startled the slumbering mass from its sleep of death. The *bellum multorum capitum*—the hydra-headed monster—began to show signs of movement; soon a few of its myriad heads raised themselves, and commenced to hiss and show their fangs in irritation and alarm; and, since that time, the monster has writhed and roared in its vain attempts to get away from the hateful light poured down upon it from above. It is of that glorious light from Heaven that I would speak this evening.

As I have already said, from the spirit-world has constantly been shed upon mankind; but it has just as constantly been extinguished, or turned into a baleful, blood-red glare by the demons of man's selfishness, ambition, pride, and sensuality; and the most effective instrument employed in this selfish perversion is ecclesiasticism or priestcraft. This has ever been the "Old Man of the Sea," who having once, under false pretences, got his limbs around the neck of humanity, could never be thrown off but by a mighty struggle, and after he had become drunk with power and pride. His ecclesiasticism ever lifted man out of the darkness and mire of ignorance? No; it has always delighted to keep him there, while presenting the show of a desire, and a seemingly frantic effort, to save him from everlasting ruin. Moreover, experience has shown that no amount of intellectual culture *per se* will prove adequate to counteract the enslaving influence of sectarian church organization, which just as inevitably leads to corruption of doctrine and an abnegation of true spirituality as the rivers run into the sea.

What was the condition of the so-called Christian Church when Modern Spiritualism dawned upon the world? What is it still? I will use the words of a man who has dared to tell the truth in this matter, though, apparently, he cannot afford to be fair toward the new spiritual revelation which would go far toward curing the evil he so truthfully depicts. In an article entitled "Religion in these Days," the editor of *Scribner's Monthly* said in January, 1879: "Society is honey-combed with infidelity. Men stagger in their pulpits, with their burden of difficulties and doubts [sic]. The theological seminaries have become shaky places, and faith has taken flight from an uncounted number of souls, leaving them in darkness and sadness, that no words can describe. All this is true. It is so true that tears may well mingle in one's ink as he writes it." And why, I may ask, should the preachers "stagger in their pulpits"? I answer, because they are not preaching the truth; the spirituality of the so-called religion of which they are the ministers has nearly all departed; and they cannot bring the mass of mankind to gather round a lifeless corpse. When it has been buried out of sight, from its ashes will spring up an angel form to which all mankind will bow; for she will point with inviting gestures to a God of Love, and to a heavenly home, to which all His creatures will rush with longing gaze and eager footsteps.

But now I seem to hear the protest of the venerable *Doctor of Divinity*—a minister of Christ by human consecration and ordination—pretending to a divine mission or vocation, but accredited only with a parchment certificate, conferred by a theological seminary, of which, with its blue ribbon attachment, this "legate of the skies" often seems to be more proud, than desirous to win from his Master the glorious award, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Let me say, I honor—reverence, from the depths of my soul—a true minister of Christ—one who really shows his Master's calling by observing His precepts of humility and self-abnegation, and who "goes about doing good"; but pomp, and pride, and arrogance, luxurious display, the love of applause, the ambition to be called an eloquent preacher, and command a large salary for pulpit services, and besides all this, the spirit of bigotry and persecution—all these things are not *edifying* in the follower of Him who had not where to lay his head, who washed the feet of his disciples, who gave his greatest attention to the poor, who inveighed against the selfishness and self-indulgence of the rich, and denounced the Scribes and Pharisees, the hypocrites of his time, with withering words of scorn and indignation. Oh! what a mockery is a fashionable church, and a luxurious minister, while the starving multitudes all around it go unfed with the "bread of life," or indeed with any other bread. Oh! how beautiful is the "outside of the cup and of the platter!" But says my *reverend* friend, "What does this miserable delusion of the devil, called Spiritualism, bring to mankind, to take the place of our divinely established church, and its sacred doctrines of everlasting life and everlasting dominion?"

Of this fact the attitude of what is called the Church of the New Jerusalem offers a singular illustration. Though calling themselves the followers of the Spiritist, Envoys of Swedenborg, they show the same spirit of ignorance and shallow intolerance toward Spiritualism as the Presbyterian and other denominational bigots of what is called *Evangelicalism*; and this although they can show no authority from the great seer for forbidding any church organization whatever.

Are people to be converted to the true religion by the vulgar rappings on a table, or the often-exposed jugglery of the dark cabinet? Can any good come out of that? Well, all the good you can find in *your* system came out of Nazareth—the meaneast and most disreputable place of its time in Palestine, and from the preaching of a few poor and illiterate fishermen. You, Christian clergyman, should not despise seemingly mean things. Was not your Master born in a manger, apparently to shock the pride of such people as you? God likes to humble human arrogance; for he always chooses "the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise" in their own conceit; as the apostle said, "that no flesh should glory before God."

But I now proceed to answer the question more fully, by showing what are the religious doctrines which have come from the spirit-world in these latter times. That such is really their origin, I have not the time at present to prove in detail, but must leave the discussion of that matter for another occasion. Sufficient for me to say, I present, no theories or speculations of my own—I offer nothing which has not come by spiritual communication—either by the voice of unsupervised speakers or the hand of impressionist mediums; and I am prepared to give time, place, and circumstance for everything presented. For its authenticity and verity, therefore, the evidence is far stronger than for any of the dogmas wrung by human ingenuity from the doubtful texts of that collection of ancient pamphlets (*ex libris*) called the Bible—not to speak with any irreverence of this so-called Book, which is, in fact, a collection of writings, gathered and arranged by man's will or wisdom, and pronounced canonical by the decree of a human council. These writings are spiritual and sacred as far as they can be proved to be such; and I believe they are authentic to the extent of their internal claims; but when any manuscripts a plenary inspiration, and consequent infallibility, for every word or statement in these Scriptures, he discredits the Book itself, as well as his own common sense and intellectual sanity.

The spiritual communications of our times explain the Bible, both the Old and the New Testament; and it is not going beyond the truth to say that, had the Bible and the whole Christian system been swept away, and all remembrance of them effaced from the human mind, previous to 1818, everything true or valuable, in a religious point of view, would have been restored by spiritual communication since that time; that is, the body of truth which has come to us in this way, since the date mentioned, really includes everything essential to the religion which the Bible, including Christ's sublime teachings, stripped of their perversions, gave to mankind. To be sure, the Levitical law would be no longer extant; and our modern theologians would, doubtless, greatly miss the *sacred* edict, "Thou shalt not permit a witch to live"; though they could, of course, spare that other equally valid, but not so cruel, "Thou shalt eat no manner of fat."

Spiritualism is often spoken of as a science; sometimes, as a religion. Of course, when we are acquainted with a sufficient number of facts pertaining to any subject, we can arrange them under general principles and rules, and thus give to the subject the dignity of a special science; but, primarily, Spiritualism is religious, since it concerns particularly the *future life*, the grand topic to which nearly all religions refer. The first and most essential element, however, in every religious system is the recognition and worship of the Supreme Being—whatever name in human language may be applied to Him—still ever recognized as the Universal Father, to whom as children we should all reverently, thankfully, and prayerfully look up. I think it will be admitted that Pope expressed the uniform feeling of the enlightened, pure, and cultivated mind toward the Infinite Creator, in his well-known *Universal Prayer*:

"Father of all in every age,
In every clime, adored,
By saint, by savage, or by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord."

The theologian—the so-called Christian divine—dogmatically depicts, and with unconscious impiety addresses, the Supreme Being as a God of wrath, of inexorable severity, only to be appeased by the ignominious death of his only begotten Son, all which is in direct contradiction to the teachings of Christ, and much of the doctrine of the Old Testament.

In the light received from the higher spheres of spirit existence, and in the very language of the revelation thus received, we say: "God is omnipotent; and He is omniscient. If then he knows all, even foreknows all, and his power executes his will, even as soon as his will exists, how then could he have wrath, how could he hate, how could he revenge? The moment his will exercised itself, the effect must be accomplished. No struggle could avail, no pity could move, no submission could have time to operate. In an instant of time, the whole creation might be resolved into its original elements, or into nothing—the nothing from which the will of God formed it."

"God is love," said the beloved disciple; and so, again and again, with reiterated emphasis, say the spiritual communications. Indeed, He must be; for it involves a contradiction that he should be capable of hatred or anger. All ideas of the vengefulness, jealousy, and anger of God, are the offspring of men's ignorance or baseness. These people make God in their own image. The Jews as a nation had many detestable notions of God, though some of the Biblical writers and prophets promulgated very exalted ideas of Him; but, it must not be forgotten, these holy prophets were rejected by the senseless and idolatrous race. Unfortunately, the blind Bibliolatry of the so-called Christian sects

compels them to retain, and often to preach, the most abominable doctrines of a semi-barbarous nation. No wonder these preachers "stagger in their pulpits," to use the choice phrase of the fastidious Holland. No wonder if they should be hurled from them in their impiety. Any man that undertakes, in this enlightened age, to teach that the infinitely loving God is a jealous, wrathful despot, condemning his creatures—the objects of his limitless love—to everlasting torture, is only fit to go back to the Dark Ages, where he should be left to crawl upward into the light of civilization and Spiritualism. The hereafter will bring a sad retribution to those who thus lead men astray: hear the words of an aged clergyman, a few weeks after his departure from this world of pride and darkness:

"As I watch the beautiful angels hastening back to send out the light of love to father and mother, I am overwhelmed with a sense of God's infinite goodness, and I bow my head in humiliation that I should ever have dared to think him a God of wrath."

The words of Bryant in the communication received by me are very suggestive:

"God is the giver of all laws, physical, moral and spiritual—a ruler who deals so kindly, a father a better name by which to express him, whom all love while from his love comes a higher feeling—namely, a righteous worship. Dear friends, I weep now with joy to speak of my Father Spirit. Such benignant compassion working with such a perfect system throughout the universe! Never an atom is lost or misused by God's divine power and wisdom. No, not a thought could be misdirected by his wish. Oh! how unkind you are to repulse your best and noblest feelings! You all have such feelings; they spring spontaneously even from your birthright. Why buy them in the recesses of your hearts, and let sinful lust chase away those pure openings to future joy?"

It is often asked does Spiritualism teach the *personality of God*. If by personality is meant a limitation, it does not; but if the true meaning of the term is given to it, as denoting what constitutes or characterizes a separate individuality, then it does. The writer of *The Great Harbinger* says very aptly: "God is the Great Father—Spirit of all spirits, the Great Type of whom all other spirits are but indications, and corresponding organizations. He is the Creator, and Sustainer, and Father of all." Religiously viewed, he further says, "he ceases to be a mere Fact, a mere Truth, a mere Principle, a mere Cause. He is our Father." In all our religious conceptions and aspirations, therefore, we are taught to view God as an individual, and in a personal relation to ourselves. Why is this? God has given to man an individualized being, or rather a being to be more and more individualized by his life on earth (the *first sphere*), and by his continued life hereafter, passing successively through the spheres of spirit existence, in which he *voluntarily* surrenders more and more of that self-will given to him in order to render him a separate entity. Thus, by yielding up his free-will, by his own volition, to God, his Creator, he really retains it; and while he acts in the will of God, he is, at the same time, exercising his own will, and thus retains his separate individuality, ever afterwards living in unity with God, his Creator, his Father, his everlasting Friend.

We say, God is omnipresent; but this is true in a sense entirely beyond our conception. God works by instrumentalities—the holy spirits, or, speaking theologically, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter; but he cannot come to mankind, through those instrumentalities, without violating the greatest law of their spiritual being, until they, in humility and with the surrender of their own will, ask him to come; and this fact explains the true office and limitation of *prayer*. Man must in spirit, and from his heart, or the depths of his spiritual being, go to God in prayer, or the holy angels, who do the will of God, cannot visit him and assist him. He prays to God, because it is only by God's will he can be aided; and then the aid comes from God through his ministering spirits who bring it. Thus, practically, God has *personality*. Every lofty aspiration of our souls, every pure desire of our hearts for spiritual good, shows that we can only conceive of God in a personal relation. His attributes are ever described as personal—love, wisdom, mercy, and beneficence to prayer. The spirits recognize this far better than we can on earth; and this is the first lesson they have to take, if they have not learned it in the material life.

All the souls of mankind emanated from God, and were made in his image, the finite in the image of the Infinite. In their first state, they knew no existence separate from that of their Creator—no will distinct from the Divine Will, and hence had but a dawning impression of individuality. With these virgin souls, in the Eden of their innocence, there could be no evil, because they were *one* with Him who is infinite goodness; for evil is nothing but a departure from, or an antagonism to, God. There is no *absolute* evil, aid of course no spiritual impersonation of it, except those depraved human spirits who have not yet turned toward the divine light, and are lost in the dark mazes of their own self-will.

A material life is the means divinely appointed to give the pure and passive emanations from the Deity that individuality required to constitute them conscious, self-acting, intelligent beings. They must learn to distinguish good from evil—in other words, they must experience the consequences of living apart from God, in order that they may truly appreciate the joys of being in unison with his spirit of infinite love—the glory and happiness of being the pure sons of God; pure, because proved by trial and suffering; truly the sons of God, because choosing to be such; and one with God, because, after purification, willing only to do that which God himself wills, and hence having the power to effect everything they desire.

Such is the true relation of the finite to the

Don't for a moment let any of my friends think that I am going to join the church; no man should not be a fool twice in his lifetime the same way, and I am not one. The danger would be, if I should live long enough, that I might join one; but I am not. The Christian church is in the direction of Modern Spiritism. I have never moved a step toward that institution since I left it, and never intend to. I am not a member of the church, and my spirit-friends—some of whom were church-members—say that I am wise in what I say on this point, and I know I am.

... This is the funeral you saw for me immediately on our return." I may add here, that Mrs. Reed believes the vision to have been presented to her by the spirit-wife of Dr. Keith, who was herself a remarkable medium, and whose *démi* cast a gloom over her husband that he was unable to dissipate.

DR. H. B. STORER.

deliberately adopt in his soul as true; which the most orthodox of mortals can only, and this after infinite essentially *impious* effort to put out the eyes of his mind persuade himself to "believe that he believes"¹²—*Thos Carlyle—Life of John Sterling, chap. vii.*

By reference to her card in another column it will be seen that Lottie Fowler, the well-known clairvoyant and test medium, has returned to this city from a professional tour. She may be found at 10 Davis street, Boston, by all desiring her services.

DRS. NEWTON AND FULLER,
Temple Street, Bristol, Gloucestershire.

REPLIES TO QUESTIONS.

Questions and Answers.

A.—John the Baptist merely occupied the position of harbinger of the New Dispensation. John the Baptist represented on earth communication with the most exalted spheres of existence.

ers of the divine nature. Such is soul; and, be-
such, our text says IT BELONGS TO GOD.—*James Pr
man Clarke.*

Public Free-Circle Meetings

I just like a little girl. I want to say I bring m

[illegible]

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